



COUNTY OF MERCER
Workforce Investment Board
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LITERACY COMMITTEE

March 20, 2013 – 8:45 a.m. –10:00 a.m.
Mercer County Community College – Kerney Campus

Present: Melinna Harris (MCCC), Pat Shump, (LWD), Gay Egan (Mercer Street Friends), Dora DeGeorge (One Stop), Jane Kleindienst (Lutheran Social Ministries), Scott Bollwage, (MCCC), Sharon Nemeth (MCTS), Lynne Wise (Home Front), Tonya Coy (UIH), Peg Gould (MCCC), Monica Weaver (MCCC), Paula Rossi (Princeton Y)

Staff: Beverly Mills

Review and Approval of February 20, 2013 Minutes:

Provost Monica Weaver, Co-Chair of the WIB Literacy Committee, opened the meeting. The minutes from the February 20, 2013 meeting were reviewed. In reference to the second paragraph (second page) the last sentence should read, “*The ETS test is an alternative.*” Gay Egan mentioned that she was not able to connect with Smith & Solomon for this meeting (as referenced in the minutes). Lynne Wise made a motion to accept the minutes with the correction; 2nd by Sharon Nemeth with one abstention by Peg Gould. The minutes will be placed on the Mercer County WIB website.

Adult Literacy Consortium Update as of March 20, 2013:

- FY 2013 enrollment is 692 which is 73% of the contracted goal of 949; the third quarter report is due April 19, 2013
- The ABS contract was received on March 1, 2013 – copies were distributed to consortium members
- There will be changes to Adult Education programs. Recommendations to the NJ Board of Education which is still in the discussion phase—transfers the State’s education regulations from Title 6 to Title 6A of the Administrative Code. These changes will include:
 - 1) Responsibility of adult basic skills and GED programs to be moved to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development from the Department of Education;

- 2) Certification for a high school diploma—changes language to add an approved adult education assessment to GED – the adult education assessment must be approved by the US Department of Education for a state issued high school diploma;
 - 3) Programs receiving State or Federal funding must offer adult basic skills, GED or event school for foreign born students for **free**;
 - 4) 30 credit route – some changes in general education courses acceptable;
 - 5) Replaces \$50 fee with fee appropriate to the test.
- Legislation – the House passed a bill on 3/25/13 to consolidate 354 federal programs including adult education into one workforce program to be administered by states “as they see fit.” This is the 5 year renewal of WIA for \$6 billion. This would result in competition between many needy groups for available funds.

Since the State still has no answer about the GED test as of this date, Sharon inquired if the State has a record keeping system. She voiced concern over students being lost in the shuffle during this time of transition.

Melinna answered the service is contracted to NRS PRO – also the State Department of Education has microfiche. Forms can also be sent to the State for verification should there be a problem. Melinna added that MCCC has four examiners available as well as an extra Saturday however that’s still not enough spaces to fill the demand. She also mentioned the passing rate has gone down; Gay said she has observed the same with her population.

Transitions Committee:

Gay Egan distributed drafts of the brochure for final comments. In answer to a question raised about distribution, it was noted the brochures are intended for the One Stop, Literacy Consortium members, public libraries, GED testing centers, corrections and Youth Corp.

It was agreed the brochure was ready to be designed; the final addition will be contact information for Mercer County Community College.

SCALES Report (discussion):

The report was very lengthy – one comment was about the recommendation by the Government for continued study. To achieve this additional State funding is needed. Furthermore, it was mentioned, NJ has no formal Adult Education Department or representation on the federal or state levels. Another comment was there should be a formalized adult high school system.

Melinna advised starting to look at other funding sources since it is highly unlikely funding will be restored.

Peg mentioned she believed the report, in spite of solicited input, was tempered. There is an earlier draft of the report that is available – she will forward to interested committee members.

Professional Development Day –April 26, 2013:

Speakers include:

- **Finding Funding:** Andrewa Simzak Levandowski (Reference Librarian, Instruction and Funding Information, NJ State Library)
- **Facilitating Adult Learning:** Dr. Alisa Belzer, Associate Professor, Rutgers University
- **Jobs4Jersey:** Craig Jez, Business Resource Manager, Mercer County One Stop

Announcements:

Paula Rossi mentioned a newspaper in Princeton has advertised for people to volunteer as tutors. Would this be something to pursue with the literacy committee? She mentioned receiving interest from retirees from teaching as well as the business world. Lynne said Home Front has 14 volunteers; Gay said Mercer Street Friends has 9. Paula asked if this could be done on a county level --- try to galvanize volunteers throughout Mercer County?

Committee discussed the importance of making sure this is a well-managed system, should we decide to pursue. It was also suggested a point person should be in charge of the volunteers as this would be time consuming. Suggestions included Bonner students, etc. Monica suggested the formation of a Volunteer Subcommittee.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Literacy Committee Meeting: Wednesday, **May 15, 2013** (no meeting in April in lieu of Professional Development Day).